

## Treasured Bay Needs Protection (Delaware State News)

By: Rep. Mike Castle--June 20, 2008

Summer is here, and the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal Days are upon us! During this very exciting time of year, when people from all over the region come out to celebrate and enjoy the outdoors, I am reminded of how important it is to preserve our natural resources so all of us can live here happily and healthfully.

However, I am disheartened that the Chesapeake Bay remains listed on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) list of top ten dirty waters.

The Chesapeake Bay's Watershed covers 64,000 beautiful square miles including parts of Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, New York, Virginia, and D.C. It is a hub of tourism, fishing, wildlife, recreational activity, and much more. It supports more than 3,600 different species of plants and animals, and its resources drive the economies of nearby towns and cities.

Realizing the significance of the Bay to local heritage and eco-systems, the governors of Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, along with the EPA and the mayor of D.C., created The Chesapeake Bay Program in 1983 to help restore the Chesapeake Bay Waterways.

Since the establishment of the Chesapeake Bay Program, several Members of Congress from districts bordering the Chesapeake and I have worked hard to represent the needs of the Chesapeake Bay. I have consistently pushed for funding to continue to improve the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries and to protect our natural and cultural resources. Recently, Congress acted to reauthorize the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network (the Gateway Network), which is a series of parks, wildlife refuges, maritime museums, historic sites and water trails along the Chesapeake. The Gateway has grown to include 156 sites in 6 states and D.C. as well as the Trap Pond State Park and the Nanticoke River Water Trail in Delaware. Many children have enjoyed the educational opportunities provided by the rich ecology and history of the watershed. With continued support for the Network and by providing access to these sites, we will help develop the next generation of environmental stewards.

In fact, in 2004 the National Park Service completed a Chesapeake Bay Special Resources study and recommended the Gateways Network be made permanent and even expanded because of the remaining need for funding and assistance to improve public access, education and interpretation, and stewardship of the natural, historical, and cultural resources in the watershed. As a result, earlier this month, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network Continuing Authorization Act, which provides permanent status to the Gateways. It also includes support for volunteer groups, foundations, museums, parks, and other institutions linked by their dedication to preserving and revitalizing the Bay. This initiative, which I supported, was made possible by a strong bipartisan consensus and the support of local and regional officials.

It is my hope that this legislation will foster a long-term sense of cooperation among the concerned parties and allow us to move forward with the crucial task of protecting this national treasure. From the fishing industry to tourism to rich local

histories, the Bay constitutes a large part of our identity. I will continue to work with my colleagues in Congress as well as concerned parties throughout the region, and I am confident that our efforts will produce real results.

However, it is important for each of us to realize what we can each do to help in this effort. There are simple steps we can include in part of our day to day lives which will help preserve the beauty and quality of our natural environment.

- Conserving water - taking shorter showers, tending to leaky faucets, and only running dishwasher or washing machine when necessary
- Reducing energy consumption - turning off lights when you leave the room, using fans instead of air conditioning when possible, and hanging clothes out to dry occasionally, rather than always using the washer
- Recycling regularly - using reusable cups and plates instead of disposable, selling or repairing old goods instead of throwing them away, and using cloth grocery bags instead of plastic
- Safely disposing of household hazardous wastes - always follow the disposal instructions for products such as anti-freeze, auto battery, brake fluid, hair spray, nail polish, prescription and over the counter medicines, adhesives and glues, bleach and most household cleaners, pool chemicals and others

These easy tasks are just the beginning! The Chesapeake Bay Program Website <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/> lists many other ways that you and your family can get involved -- and even become a volunteer for the Gateway Network.

With everyone's help we can remove the Chesapeake Bay from the EPA's top ten dirty waters list, restoring this precious resource for future generations. This summer, as you enjoy what Delaware and the Bay states have to offer -- maybe at the Canal Day celebrations, while driving over the Bay Bridge, or at the beach -- please take the time to consider what you can do to help protect our many natural resources.